


GRUFFUDD HIRAETHOG (died 1564), bard and herald

Name: Gruffudd Hiraethog
Date of death: 1564
Gender: Male
Occupation: bard and herald
Area of activity: Poetry; Royalty and Society
Author: Thomas Parry

He sang the praises of the gentry of Denbighshire, Anglesey, Caernarvonshire and Merioneth, and is supposed to have been the disciple of [Tudur Aled](#). His licence to go on bardic circuits (which still exists, *Reports*, i, 1021) was granted in 1545-6 under the hands of [James Vaughan](#), Hugh Lewis and [Lewys Morgannwg](#). He is best known as a bardic teacher; some of the foremost bards of the second half of the 16th century, such as [Simwnt Fychan](#), [Wiliam Ll n](#), [Wiliam Cynwal](#), [Siôn Tudur](#) and [Raff ap Robert](#) having been his disciples. Some of these men came into possession of his manuscripts after his death. Gruffudd Hiraethog best exemplifies the interest in heraldry which was characteristic of the bards of his period, and extensive collections of pedigrees made by him still remain such as Pen. MSS. 132-6, 139, 176. These show that he was able to trace the pedigrees of families all over Wales. The most noteworthy fact about him however is that of all the traditional bards he shows most clearly the influence of the Renaissance, in that he was interested in pursuits other than pedigree-collecting and eulogy-writing in the traditional fashion. He compiled a Welsh dictionary with quotations from the works of the bards to illustrate the meanings (Pen. MS. 230). A collection of proverbs made by him appears in [Llanstephan MS 52](#) . In his preface to this collection he writes appreciatively of the Welsh language and severely criticizes those who neglected it and refused to patronize it. His zeal in this respect is exactly that of the humanists. The collection of proverbs was copied by [William Salesbury](#) and published under the title *Oll Synnwyr Pen Kembro y gyd* (in 1546 or 1547). In 1552 [Salesbury](#) translated into Welsh a work on rhetoric, and prefixed the translation with a letter to Gruffudd Hiraethog in which he says: 'You are so anxious [[Salesbury](#) uses the Welsh word *hiraethog*, thus punning on the bard's name] about the state of the language that you take upon yourself too heavy a burden, by searching high and low for every scrap of tattered manuscript to read and peruse, in order to obtain some help to sustain this language which is beginning to deteriorate.' [Salesbury](#) also calls him 'my foremost companion in these pursuits.' In the preface to *Oll Synnwyr Pen*, [Salesbury](#) exhorts Welsh people to appreciate the labours of Gruffudd, who 'is saving the language from eternal extinction.' [Edmund Prys](#), in his bardic contention with [Wiliam Cynwal](#), states that Gruffudd was more learned than any two men together, and classes him with [Salesbury](#). The humanists clearly regarded him as one of themselves. An elegy upon him was written by [Wiliam Cynwal](#), and another, in the form of a dialogue between the living and the dead, by [Wiliam Ll n](#). It has however been suggested that the latter is a mock elegy and that Gruffudd was alive when it was written.

Author

Sir Thomas Parry, (1904 - 1985)

Sources

J. Gwenogvryn Evans (ed.), *Oll synnwyr pen Kembero ygyd* (Bangor 1902)

Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies, ii, 115, viii, 3

Further Reading

Wikipedia Article: [Gruffudd Hiraethog](#)

Works

[*Barddoniaeth gan hen awdwyr or, Ancient Welsh poetry*](#) (Middle Hill Press 1840?)

Additional Links

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Published date: 1959

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